

ERGONOMICS

What is ergonomics? Ergonomics is the practice of arranging the workplace environment to fit employees so they can perform their jobs without getting injured. It's also making sure that you don't physically overexert your body. When ergonomic practices are correctly applied in the work environment, musculoskeletal discomfort (MSD), such as general aches and pains and fatigue, are reduced dramatically. Reducing stress on your body will help eliminate many injuries associated with overuse of muscles, awkward positions, and repetitive motions that could cause musculoskeletal disorders.

Who's most at risk?

Excessive or repetitive physical demands placed on your body cause MSDs...and just about every employee will experience at least one work-related MSD in his or her lifetime. One out of every three MSDs are serious enough to result in lost work time. The majority of work-related MSDs involve jobs that expose you to one or more of the following risk factors:

- **Repetition:** Repeating the same motion every few seconds for two hours at a time, or using a keyboard, mouse or other device steadily for more than four hours daily.
- **Forceful exertions:** Lifting more than 75 pounds at any one time. Pushing or pulling with more than 20 pounds of initial force. For instance, pushing a 65-pound box across a floor for more than two hours a day. Or, pinching or gripping heavy objects more than two hours a day.
- **Awkward positions:** Working with your hands above your head, bending your back, neck, or wrists, and kneeling or squatting for more than two hours a day.
- **Contact stress:** Working with tools that have finger grooves on the sides, such as hammers and unpadded pliers, for long periods of time.
- **Vibration:** Using tools or equipment with high vibration levels such as chainsaws or jackhammers for more than 30 minutes a day or devices with moderate vibration like jigsaws or grinders for more than two hours a day.

When should you report MSD symptoms?

Everyone experiences pain or stiffness after working hard from time to time. This doesn't mean every injury you have will lead to an MSD. You should become concerned if your injuries don't go away and the symptoms also include numbness, burning or tingling.

Who do you call? Contact the Risk Management/Safety Division to arrangement for an ergonomic evaluation of your work place.

Ergonomics

Safety Training Handout

■ **Good ergonomic practices reduce injuries**

- There are tasks in the workplace that put unhealthy stress on your body.
- The goal of ergonomics is to identify these dangerous tasks and prevent injuries by changing the way you do your job.

■ **What is a Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD)?**

- A serious injury caused by excessive or repetitive physical demands placed on your body over a long period of time.
- A MSD can affect any body part that is placed under excessive or repetitive stress.

■ **How serious are MSDs?**

- MSDs can become chronic, meaning symptoms won't go away.
- They can result in lost workdays, surgery or even permanent disability.
- People who develop MSDs have trouble performing simple tasks such as walking or holding a glass of water.

■ **You should report MSD symptoms when:**

- Pain is severe.
- Pain becomes worse over time.
- Symptoms include numbness or tingling.
- Your injury keeps you up at night.

■ **Examples of activities that cause MSDs are:**

- Heavy lifting
- Tight or strong gripping
- Repeated motions
- Awkward positions
- Vibration
- Contact stress

■ **Examples of actions you can take to prevent MSDs:**

- Always examine alternatives to lifting.
- Increase your grip strength by keeping your wrists straight.
- Spread repetitive tasks throughout the day.
- Stand on a platform to bring your work closer to you.
- Use anti-vibration gloves or tool wraps.
- Report symptoms early.